

Course Substitution for Graduate Students with Disabilities

Graduate Council Approval –

Provost Approval –

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) serves as the campus resource for students with disabilities covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (as amended in 2008). Students who seek reasonable accommodation for their disability must complete the registration process outlined on the ODS website. The ODS will determine what reasonable accommodations are consistent with each student's disability and advise academic units regarding those accommodations. Examples of reasonable accommodations could include extended time for exams, a reduced distraction environment for testing, alternative format materials, a reader, scribe or assistive technology. An official "accommodation letter" is generated from the ODS that verifies those accommodations for which the student is eligible. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that this letter is provided to the faculty member in a timely way, and to contact the faculty member directly to make individualized arrangements for needed accommodations.

Reasonable accommodations for mathematics courses and foreign languages courses are typically provided consistent with the student's good-faith effort to complete the course successfully. Course substitution may be the appropriate reasonable accommodation in cases in which the graduate student cannot be successful in the course with reasonable accommodation because of the functional limitations imposed by his or her condition and when an appropriate substitute course can be taken to meet course requirements.

The ODS provides consultation to the academic units based solely on students' needs and the impact disabilities may have on specific courses. Ultimately, the determination of whether course substitution is reasonable lies with the graduate program. While the University is committed to assisting students with disabilities to participate fully in academic programs, the University is not required to fundamentally alter any programs or activities, including academic programs of study. Faculty members are the recognized experts in their fields and are responsible for identifying and describing the essential elements of academic degree programs.

Course Substitution Request and Implementation Process

As required, the graduate program will identify courses for which substitutes may be offered and courses that may substitute. Consideration of a course substitution is done on a case-by-case basis and requires the following actions by the student with a disability:

The request process for course substitution and implementation is stated below:

1. The student must request a course substitution as part of his/her ODS accommodations plan. This request should be made at a minimum of one to two semesters prior to the student's anticipated completion of their degree requirements. The student's documentation must contain specific and reasonably current information (the ODS recommends within the past 3-5 years) that supports the request and be provided by licensed experts.

2. The student must write a letter to the appropriate graduate program director or department chair and submit the letter to the ODS. The ODS will forward the student's letter and a formal request for course substitution to the student's graduate program chairperson for consideration.

The letter from the student should include:

- The student's name, address, student I.D. number, and graduate program
- The name of the course where the substitution is requested
- An explanation of the functional limitations related to their disability (not the specific diagnosis)
- A rationale for the substitution request
- A history of any previous attempts to complete the course in question
- Any past history of course substitutions granted by previously attended colleges or universities
- A statement that the appropriate documentation verifying the disability is on file with ODS

The graduate program director or department chair or his or her designee will forward the request to the program faculty committee overseeing the degree program who will then make a decision regarding the request and send the written response to the graduate program chairperson. The graduate program director or department chair and program faculty may consult with the ODS staff to explore appropriate and reasonable accommodations related to pedagogy. During the Summer semester, graduate program faculty committees may appoint a designate to handle requests on their behalf. Only the governing graduate program faculty committee or its appointed designate may handle such requests and those committees must review all decisions made by the designee at the next available regular meeting. The graduate program director or department chair will be responsible for notifying the student and the ODS in writing of the result within 30 business days (or 60 days if during the Summer semester). When a substitution is granted, notification will include the results allowing for the requested course that may be substituted and the process to be followed for implementing the substitution. The process for implementation will include formal notification to the Registrar of the approved substitution.

When a substitution is not approved, notification will include the reasons why the course could not be substituted. Student appeals of the denial of course substitution requests must follow any college or school process that has been established for that purpose. If, at the conclusion of any appeals within the college or school, a student believes he or she has been denied a course substitution in violation of law or University policy, the student may follow the University's Section 504/ADA Grievance Procedures, available in the Student Handbook on the University's website.